



Spring 2022

How Can We Make Laredo the Best Place to Be Born?



What

In partnership with Texas A&M International University, Start Early conducted an analysis of the early learning landscape, creating a series of recommendations and a systems map of the existing resources and providers. As part of this work, Start Early engaged with a number of Laredo parents, service providers, and local leaders.



Stakeholders Represented

- 9 Laredo parents
- 4 leaders from the P-20 education system
- 4 stakeholders working on addressing domestic violence
- 5 representatives or providers from health care organizations
- 3 early intervention or special education leaders
- 2 providers engaged in perinatal support and/or home visiting
- 2 leaders from other community organizations



“Birth was traumatic for me and people don’t always fully understand.”

“I didn’t know what postpartum would do to my hormones. Having information publicized about what happens to your body would be so helpful.”

- Many stakeholders referred to the need for more comprehensive emotional, social, and medical supports post-birth.
- Some expressed a desire for more resources like lactation classes, support groups, and other spaces during the perinatal period.



“I just took my son to the library and he had a great time. It is such a nice facility but so under-used.”

“We need more things for families to do. I often take my kids to San Antonio, but I would love to have splash parks, more museums available locally.”

- The need for more low-cost and accessible resources for families to play and learn together was a common thread.
- Several stakeholders also shared that many families did not know about or know how to take advantage of the resources that Laredo has.



“We do a lot of education for people about our services - Rotary, schools, Mexican consulate, media, you name it.”

“Our program tries to go everywhere to meet families - we go to events, coordinate with community partners and work hard to spread the message.”

“We educate people on our services one person at a time. We do a lot of fairs - it is challenging.”

- Many service providers described incredibly robust and time-consuming efforts to reach families.
- Several also expressed a desire to have increased connection and coordination between programs and agencies.



“People aren’t quite poor enough, but they still don’t have enough resources. We want people to have babies but we don’t help parents enough.”

“Families may have mixed status children. They may receive resources for some children and have to stretch and divide those, which is a very sad position for the parent.”

“In the colonias, families may not have technology. They may not be able to travel if there is bad weather, so they may miss appointments.”

- Ensuring Laredians have comprehensive access to resources was a common concern raised by both parents and service providers.
- Many surfaced the many different types of barriers that face families, from administrative to eligibility and beyond.



“If I could change one thing about Laredo...”

“I would make resources available to everyone without regard to residency or Social Security.”

“I would make city government more efficient and get rid of red tape.”

“I would make a one-stop shop where residents can get all of their needs met.”

“I would change the stigma and perception that some people have about Laredo.”

- Stakeholders had a wide range of suggestions about how to improve Laredo.
- Common themes were to increase the effectiveness or accessibility of existing programs, develop more coordination, or build on a sense of pride for the community.



“If I could invest in one thing in Laredo....”

“I would invest in more education classes or programs for families.”

“I would invest in an inclusion policy to make every part of the city more inclusive. For example, our parks are beautiful but the playgrounds may not be wheelchair accessible.”

“I would invest in universal health care and childcare, that anyone could access.”

“I would invest in quality childcare.”

- Similarly, stakeholders had a range of ideas for where to invest in the Laredo community.
- There was a shared belief in the need for more access to resources, increased quality. There were also specific needs lifted around things like parent education and inclusive settings and programs.



Potential Next Steps

- Continue to gather input from families to learn about what investments they'd seek to make in Laredo's PN-3 system
- Ensure representation from families who reflect the diverse range of experiences that comprise Laredo (inc. by socio-economic status, by geography such as city, county, and colonias, by school district, by immigration status, and by disability status)
- Engage families intentionally, strategically, and consistently





Every child has equitable opportunity to reach their full potential to thrive in school and in life.

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